

SPEECH

OF

HON. F. W. PICKENS,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

ON THE BILL TO

DISTRIBUTE THE PROCEEDS OF THE PUBLIC LANDS AMONG THE STATES.

In the House of Representatives, July 2, 1841—On the bill to distribute the proceeds of the public lands amongst the States.

Mr. PICKENS said he did not rise to trespass upon the time of the committee by any lengthy discussion as to the mere details of the bill. Contradictory and unsound as many of those details were, he left them to be adjusted and modified by the friends of the measure. It would be his purpose to speak to the great principles and vital points involved in it, and connect it with the other fiscal measures, which constitute one system as a whole, to be presented by the dominant party at present, for the adoption of this Congress, and the sanction of the country. We were induced to believe that Congress was called together at this extraordinary session for the purpose of relieving what were said to be the necessities of the Treasury—to relieve the wants of the Treasury—because the means would be short of the demands. And the Secretary of the Treasury had laid before us a report, which Mr. P. could not defend, but the statements of which he would avail himself of in the remarks he would make. The Secretary had called the attention of Congress to the fact that there would be, at the end of this year, a deficit in the Treasury of six millions of dollars, and that, in the course of 1842, there would also be a deficiency of six millions more. And, instead of preparing to meet this supposed exigency by prudence and wise means, we propose, first, to divide out annually three millions of revenue that has been received in common for forty years, so as to make this supposed deficit still greater. Instead of relieving the Treasury by supplying it with means, for which purpose we were called together, you propose first to withhold from it one of its largest and most just sources of supply. The next great proposition we have made to us is, to borrow twelve millions of dollars for eight years. Connect this with the other, and it is nothing more nor less than a proposition to borrow money, that you may distribute. You propose to raise taxes with

one hand, that you may distribute the revenue with the other.

Again: to meet all these arrangements, we have the proposition to raise the taxes, so as to increase the revenue from customs at least twelve millions of dollars over what it would be under existing laws. Mr. P. said he would not say what had taken place in committee; but the Secretary of the Treasury, in presenting his whole system of measures, had recommended an increase of the tariff, so that every article now under 20 per cent. duty, should be increased up to 20 per cent.; and articles duty free were also to be raised up to 20 per cent. except such as were intended to be a benefit to the manufacturing interest; and those things that they specially consumed were still to be duty free. The compromise was so framed that the first half of its operation was intended to benefit investments in manufactures, and the last half operated to the benefit of the exporting or free trade interest; and now the proposition was to deprive us of this benefit. It was well known that next year duties would commence to be paid in cash; and if the home valuation were to be executed, (which I do not believe can be done, as it is impracticable,) that, with cash duties, would be equal at least to 10 per cent. The whole amount of the proposition was, in effect, (for the last biennial operation of the compromise went into operation 31st December next,) to increase our taxes to 20 per cent. upon all importations, except such as were consumed especially by the manufacturers. Considering the vast and increasing resources of the country, it would not be difficult to show that this would give us a revenue from customs in eighteen months from this time, of at least twenty-six millions of dollars. In two years, in all human probability, our importations will be one hundred and fifty millions: say that twenty millions are excepted, and then you will have, at any rate, twenty-six millions from imports at 20 per cent. ad valorem. This will be at least twelve millions more than we would have this year under the present system. It is then a proposition to increase the taxes at least twelve millions of dollars. We then have a proposition pending (which he feared

would become a law) to create a United States Bank, and for this Government to subscribe into it ten million of dollars, with the condition to increase it up to near seven millions more. Take the ten millions, however, and that is to be done by creating Government stock at five per cent.; which is the same thing as to borrow it. We then have the twelve million loan bill—the proposition to increase the taxes twelve millions, and the ten millions stock in a Bank, making in all thirty-four millions of dollars, in funds proposed to be raised immediately by the dominant party of this country. But, sir, in addition to all this, we now have the present bill before us, which is to distribute annually three millions of our revenues. It would not be at all difficult to show that, with our increasing population, and returning prosperity, we will have, in eighteen months from this, not only three millions from the public lands, in revenue, but at least five millions annually. However, assume for the present the sum to be three millions, and to distribute that amount annually, is the same thing in effect as to fund the public lands, or, in other words, to create Government stock at six per cent. interest, to the amount of fifty millions of dollars. What is the difference? Suppose you were to say that you will create Government stock for fifty millions dollars, and that you would divide or pay over the interest annually amongst the States, is it not plain, that as far as money is concerned, it is identically the same proposition as to divide three millions of dollars annually from your revenue? If the amount should be more, of course the stock would be greater. The proposition then, as far as an operation in finance is involved, is to fund the public lands at fifty millions of dollars. You propose to set aside that great and permanent source of revenue, for the benefit of others. The wit of man cannot show the difference as far as the fiscal action of the Government is concerned, between this proposition to divide the land revenue, and a proposition to create Government stock at 6 per cent. to the amount of fifty millions of dollars; for it is an annual division or dividend. Stripped of its disguises and flimsy pretexts, this is its meaning, its spirit and substance, or it has none. Add this fifty millions of public stock thus to be created, to the other thirty-four millions, and we have an aggregate of eighty-four millions of funds now proposed to be raised by this Government. These are the naked propositions made, not to relieve the wants of your Treasury, but to relieve the speculating and spendthrift race, by fixing them through this Government upon the tax-paying people of this Confederacy. So far as the pecuniary operation was involved—so far as the national finances were concerned—the effect of this and the other measures now proposed, would be to create eighty-four millions of public funds over and above the ordinary sources of revenue, and the ordinary wants of the Government. Such were the naked, undisguised propositions before the country.

This bill is only part and parcel of the same stupendous system. He had thought that Congress was called together to relieve the wants of the Treasury; but now the argument was to relieve the country—to relieve the States. Did I say to relieve

the States? No, the practical operation of the bill was to relieve not the States, but the debtor class of the States—those corporations for turnpikes, railroads, canals, and banks, that had plunged the States into debt for their purposes. Its final operation would be to fill with delusive hope all those classes of society who had attempted to tax posterity for their extravagance and profligacy.

Connecting all these measures together as one system, it did not surprise me that the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. JOHNSON] had brought forward this bill as the first to be acted on. If Congress had been called together really for the purpose of relieving the wants of the Treasury, would not the loan bill be taken up first? Would we not take up the question of the additional revenue which was called for by the Secretary of the Treasury? And then after these measures for the relief of the Treasury had been disposed of, we could then take up any secondary measure following them? But the object in truth was not to relieve the Treasury or the people, but to relieve and assist the great stock interest which had become identified with the States, and had plunged them for ten years past into debts beyond the resources, beyond the immediate abilities of their own people to meet without difficulty. And now they called upon us—upon those States and sections that had kept out of debt—to pledge the land of the country—the great public domain, for the purpose of sustaining all their interests. It was a naked and undisguised issue between the speculating and stock interest on the one side, and the great laboring and landed interest of this Confederacy on the other. Brought down to a proper analysis, this was the sum and substance of the whole matter.

You could not have an enlightened view by looking at these propositions separately; they must be viewed together, as branches of the same general system, relying on each other as fostering and sustaining certain great interests. For instance: the public stock to be subscribed in a Bank, was intended to benefit those immediately identified with the banking interest. The increase of taxes for the benefit of those who received incidental protection and got the disbursements—the loan bill would stimulate the money market. And the distribution bill was intended to benefit the foreign fund-holder. It was nominally to relieve Maryland, which was in debt fifteen millions; Pennsylvania, said to be more than twice that amount; New York, also in debt to a large amount; Illinois, Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and all those States which were in debt. Suppose the debts of the States and their corporations to equal one hundred and eighty millions of dollars, then the distribution under this bill would not pay half the interest. Those who are now interested in urging it will finally urge this Government to create immediately Government stock equal to the value of the public lands funded, and transfer that to the foreign fund-holder, and take in lieu of it State stocks now held by them. Then, in administering the proceeds of the lands, according to this bill, the Government will concentrate the whole operation within itself, and retain (at first, but will finally yield that) the distributive share of each State as an indemnity for the United States stock transferred in lieu of State stocks. Thus, the final

operation will be to assume, in this indirect mode, the debts of the States. The whole amount is to mortgage the land and labor of the country for the benefit of those who desire to live by taxing others, and thus, by legislative legerdemain, to enable the swindling speculator and spendthrift to transfer his debts to the honest and industrious, to be collected by Government, under such forms and delusions as almost to defy scrutiny.

If there be any in the community who have husbanded their resources and abstained from speculation, it is but due that they should have the full benefit of their situation in times of reverses and depression. It is not right that they should be put under contributions to relieve their more adventurous neighbors. Perhaps, in former times of speculating mania, they were ridiculed for their parsimony and want of foresight by those "who are wise in their own conceit." I am for just protection to property. I think one of the first objects of a civilized government is not only to protect property, but never to tax it unnecessarily for any object, much less for the benefit of any particular classes in community.

Sir, there is no magic power in Government to create money. Whenever Government attempts to relieve the debtor class, they must do so by using the credit or resources of those who have kept out of debt, or by losses made to fall upon the creditor class.

I abhor that modern demagoguism that would relieve one portion of the community by taxing another portion. The honest proceeds of labor in all its branches ought never to be touched, except from necessity. Whenever a man has accumulated property by fair enterprise and industry, let Government protect him in the full enjoyment of it for himself and his heirs. I respect that property which has thus been acquired, and its possessor, as well as the property that has been inherited from an honest ancestry. I respect it as the exponent of industry, frugality, enterprise, and worth. But I have no feeling for that artificial wealth which has been fostered by incorporated credit, with all its arrogance and conventional habits. Those who have acquired property by grinding the face of the poor, and by unhallowed schemes of swindling speculation—I care not with what supercilious air and upstart pretension they may claim rank, yet I feel, and have ever felt, towards all such, the most profound contempt. Let Government be impartial—exactly just to all interests, from the peasant who dwells in his mountain cottage, up to the man of princely fortune who spreads his palace upon the seashore.

Mr. Chairman: This bill is calculated to be one of the most important in its future operations that has ever been presented to the adoption of a deliberative assembly. There is nothing like it in the annals of legislation, except, perhaps, Mr. Fox's great East India bill. That bill was calculated to effect deeply the extensive East India possessions of Great Britain, and the fate of millions of human beings—making them not only vassals of the British crown, but dependants upon the British Ministry. True, its effects were to be felt principally by an ignorant and semi-barbarous race, who had slumbered for ages in enervated indolence. But

this bill was to operate upon an enterprising and spirited people—it was to embrace in its provisions an empire as vast and extensive in its resources as the Indies. Cast your eyes over the map of that mighty country, laved as it is by the Pacific on one side, and that stretches itself to the Gulf of Mexico in the South, and your great inland seas in the North, and you will see that it embraces a region from which empires may be carved. Where is the American heart that does not exult with pride to trace the Missouri and the Mississippi as they roll through that noble valley destined to be an inheritance for millions of free-men? Let us rejoice in its hills and plains—its rivers, and mountains, and lakes, rather than look upon them with the miser's eye as sources from whence we are to draw future contributions, to be divided amongst the needy and the avaricious. You propose, by this bill, to lay that great and growing region under annual exactions, collected, not for the common support and common defence of a united country, but to be distributed among those who will be pensioned as sturdy beggars around your plundered Treasury. Why are we now called upon to change your present land system, which has been adopted almost from the commencement of your Government, and under which such great results have been produced? Look back only thirty years ago, (a very short time in national existence,) and has the world ever seen such a change in a country? Your present system has in that period brought into existence nine States of this Confederacy. Forty years ago, and we had but a handful of daring, enterprising citizens, who had sought a home in the wilderness of the West, but now they hold a population equal to that which achieved our independence in the war of the Revolution. Peace, and happiness, and power, and civilization, have been the fruits of your present system; and why now make this great and vital change? Are we prepared to act on this vast and comprehensive subject at this extra session? You tread upon unknown ground. Other Governments have, by fatal legislation, lost their finest possessions, and we, too, by hasty and unwise legislation now, may lose our control, and finally our power, over the noblest country that ever expanded its bosom to the sun of Heaven.

The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. JOHNSON] rests this bill, and the right of this Government to make the distribution, under the Virginia ordinance of 1784, and other grants from the States, making a transfer of these lands to the Federal Government. He contended that we were bound to make this distribution. Mr. P. said he would not follow the gentleman [Mr. JOHNSON] throughout his ingenious and eloquent argument upon the construction of these deeds of cession. I will not stop to chop logic upon words with that gentleman. The argument upon that point had last winter been exhausted in the other end of this Capitol, and to go into it would be but to tread upon the same ground. Neither will I, Mr. Chairman, appeal to the *abracadabra* of the Constitution; that has long since ceased to have its charm upon this committee. I fear that consecrated parchment is hereafter to become, in the future struggles of the Repub-

lic, any thing that power may choose to make it. But, sir, if I were to dwell upon the construction of those deeds of cession, I should be totally at a loss to know how the words "common fund," which were used in all these grants, could be construed to mean a separate fund belonging to the States separately. Divide this "common fund," and give it to the States separately, and what is the result? You distribute it to the States; and by the very act of distribution you will destroy the very language of the grants. That which is declared to be "common" becomes separate. The language is, "a common fund for the use and benefit of all the States." By distribution you make it a separate fund for the use and benefit of each State instead of "all the States." It is a gross and palpable solecism. The language is so plain that it can hardly bear comment. Again, we see the language is, "according to their respective proportions in the general charge and expenditure." Now, if gentlemen claimed distribution to the States under these grants, they must "make it upon the rule which the grants lay down according to their doctrines. "According to their respective proportions in the general charge and expenditure"—what was the meaning of that? Could we understand it under our present system? No! we must go back to the period of adoption of those grants. They were made under the Articles of Confederation—previous to the adoption of the Federal Constitution. We all know that, under the Confederation, Congress had no power to tax directly. But each State had its quota of taxes to raise, to bear its "proportion in the general charge and expenditure." Congress fixed the ratio or proportion for each State, and each State raised that by taxation to suit itself. What revenue was raised, was from the States as States. Now, under this system, we can understand the terms used in the grants. They meant that whatever might come in from the lands might be a "common fund" for the "use and benefit of all the States"—"according to their respective proportions in the general charge and expenditure." That is, that their respective proportions in the general charge should be diminished by the same ratio applied to the calculation of the amount put into the "common fund" from the lands. For instance, if that "common fund" was three millions annually, then the States were to have that amount passed to their credit, "in the general charge," in the same proportion that their quota of taxes had been estimated by the Federal Government.

There is no other meaning to it. And I defy any man to understand it without taking into consideration the manner in which the Federal Government apportioned out taxes amongst the States under the Articles of Confederation. The adoption of the present Constitution had changed the whole power of taxation. Congress was now enabled to raise taxes directly from the people instead of the States. As far as the power of taxation was involved by this Government, we were now made one people. Revenue was collected from the people instead of the States. And I defy you, under the present system, to tell what is the "respective proportion in the general charge" to any State in the Union. It cannot be done. If it be true that these words jus-

tify distribution to the States, then the rule laid down by the grant itself cannot be executed. No sir! it is all a fallacy. The substance of the grants was to make it a "common fund." And if the rule laid down in the grants has been changed, it has been done by the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and Virginia herself has assented to that change by agreeing to the Constitution. That instrument now makes a common Treasury, and gives power to the Federal Government to fill it by collecting taxes from the people instead of the States, as formerly; and you have no right to make that a separate fund which comes into the common Treasury as a "common fund." There is neither logic nor justice in the construction that assumes distribution as a consequence from the grants. If you assume to distribute under the grants, you must be controlled by the rule they lay down. If you go according to "their respective proportions in the general charge," what right have you, in equity, to divide amongst the new States first ten per cent. from the proceeds over and above their common share in this "common fund?" Yet this bill proposes to give them that much besides their general dividend, and also a large amount of lands over and above. You claim in one line to be governed by the grants, and yet, in the next, you utterly disregard them. The truth is, the Constitution has made a common Treasury, and all funds coming into it are common funds, applicable to the specific objects granted in that instrument, and whenever you seek out other objects not defined, you travel into a wild field of uncertainty, where construction becomes law, and power executes whatever may be dictated by interest. Since the adoption of the Constitution there cannot be, in the nature of things, separate funds in the revenue, and to divide the Treasury, or any part of it, *as of right to the separate States*, is to *denationalize* the Union.

But, independent of this, where is your right to go beyond the Mississippi and seize upon the lands purchased by treaty? The grants from the States were confined to lands this side of that river. We purchased Florida, also, by treaty; and, besides, we paid Georgia for what we got from her, embracing Alabama and Mississippi, except a narrow strip of land south of the 35th deg. of latitude, running due west to the Mississippi, which South Carolina granted. The grants from Connecticut and New York embraced lands lying in the Canadas, and were, to a great extent, of no avail. Tennessee was carved from North Carolina, and Kentucky from Virginia. So that the grants, in reality, are applicable to no part except that rich and beautiful country that lies between the Ohio and Mississippi, embracing what was called the Northwestern Territory. Extensive, rich, and valuable as it is, embracing, as it does, four powerful States, with the probability of another very soon, yet, as compared with all that vast region that stretches itself from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains and to the Pacific, where nature revels in her loveliest and most favorite retreats, it is but small. And when we take into consideration that most of it is now settled up, and then compare the lands that are now to be sold there, with those that are to be brought into market in the Territories, that have been purchased by treaty, and it is "as a drop

in the bucket, and dust in the balance." The lands purchased by treaty, with the incidental expenses, have cost forty millions of dollars. This was paid for out of the common Treasury, by taxes raised from every portion of the Union. This land was paid for by the old States, and where is the principle, or where is the justice, that puts their proceeds up for division upon the same grounds that you claim under the grant from Virginia, which you say created a specific trust fund? There must be something understood in this more than would strike the superficial observer. If you give back to each State precisely what it has contributed or paid, it would be useless, for it would then be immaterial whether you gave it back, or whether you applied it honestly to the common purposes of the Union, and then diminished the taxes by the same amount. But if you give to one State more than it contributed, then it would be a fraud; and if you gave to one less, it would then be gross injustice. And if you finally imposed taxes to supply the vacuum created in the revenue, which operated unequally, it would then be adding to fraud and injustice, undisguised and *base oppression*. Sir, it is not intended that this system shall be equal. To talk of distributing the proceeds of lands acquired by purchase, and paid for out of the common revenue of this Government, and to pretend to equality and justice in it, is an outrage upon common sense. To attempt such a thing is ridiculous—it is worse than ridiculous—it is wantonly sporting with the resources of the Republic.

I know of no ground upon which this bill can rest, so far as related to the lands purchased, except the one openly assumed every where—to relieve the sufferings of the community (that is, the fundholder and stockjobber)—to relieve the credit of the States, &c. The amount to be distributed would not pay half the interest on the debts due, and its relief would be mockery and delusion, and those who rely on it will be fatally deceived. The whole profit and benefit will be divided amongst the money-changers, who may happen to be most in favor, for the time being, with the dominant interests that will sway your State Legislatures for selfish purposes. These will be the men who will receive the money.

The gentleman from Maryland [Mr. JOHNSON] had attempted to identify this distribution amongst the States, to relieve, as he says, the wants of the States, with the assumption of what was called the State debts by the General Government, after the Revolution. The gentleman had classified the two together. Was the gentleman serious in attempting to rest these two cases upon the same ground? What was the assumption of State debts at that time? What was the situation of the country? There was in fact no central government, or at all events it was impotent so far as taxation was concerned. We were in the midst of a revolution. Immediately after the Declaration of Independence, active, efficient governments were organized in our States, with power to tax and raise revenue. From their superior organization at the time, they were enabled to raise funds to pay your armies, to advance the means by which they were enabled to fight the battles of independence, for the general defence and welfare of the

whole country. The States came forward to advance funds in a noble cause where they had plighted to each other their faith—a cause which secured American Independence, and finally sent our stars and stripes streaming in triumph and in glory through every quarter of the habitable globe. It was in this cause that Massachusetts and South Carolina had advanced about four millions of dollars each for the defence of the whole. The rest of the States advanced also, but this was more than was advanced by any other State in the Union. The State debts of the present day were contracted in profound peace—they were contracted for the benefit of the local interests of each State in pursuing their various schemes of aggrandizement and wealth. And did the gentleman seriously put this distribution upon the same grounds with the assumption of the State debts of the Revolution? A distribution to be made not to them who had encountered peril and advanced their means for the purpose of defending the States, or sustaining the common honor of a united country; but to sustain corporations and speculators, who, like leeches, had fastened themselves upon the State Treasuries—who, by their active exertions—by means of forced majorities in the Legislatures, had combined together to plunge the country in debt beyond its immediate resources or present means of payment. Sir, were the two cases parallel? Were they to be put upon the same ground? Feeling a just pride in the unstained honor of the Revolution, and the noble cause of the States in those days, I indignantly repel the idea. You cannot put the two cases together, nor was the matter worthy of consideration in that point of view.

There has recently sprung up in the country a class of men who desired to get rid of that everlasting curse placed upon man in the first ages of society, that he should "eat his bread by the sweat of his brow." They were attempting to live by their wits instead of their labor. I am against raising funds through Government to feed these drones in society, who are too proud to work. They are the legitimate descendants of those money changers, whom Christ kicked from the Temple as hypocrites and swindlers. These are the men who hang around your public Treasury here, and in the States, always pressing for taxes, and eager for a division of the public spoils.

But the gentleman [Mr. JOHNSON] has placed this distribution upon State Rights grounds. He complains of the absorbing influence of this centralizing Government, and presses this bill because it will have a contrary tendency. Let us examine into this. The seat of vitality in our system, is the taxing power of this Government. This was a great step towards a stronger and more consolidated Government than the old Confederation. It added vastly to its centralizing power. But add now the power not only to collect taxes directly, but also the power to distribute back again amongst the States the revenue collected, and you make it then work both ways towards centralization. Collect money to distribute habitually, and you create a party in every State who will organize and act together to receive that distribution. It will be a moneyed party, looking up to the action of this Government, and forming combinations with par-

ties of like kind in every State, all moving together with eagerness and concert, stimulated by one feeling, and moved by one power. You link them all together around the Federal car—you make the meanest and lowest of all consolidation—a consolidation of moneyed interest and moneyed power. With such a system every noble and elevated feeling of patriotism would wither and die away under the absorbing and base passion of avarice. A republic is either the noblest and purest of all governments, or it is the most corrupt and profligate. It can scarcely retain a middle position. So long as it is kept free, it nurtures simplicity, manliness, and valor; but when it degenerates, it becomes the hot bed of cunning, treachery, cowardice, and selfishness.

The gentleman [Mr. JOHNSON] has himself given us a fearful picture of the centralizing influence at present of this Government; and has spoken of fifteen hundred applicants for one office, and the increasing corruptions of the Federal Government. Mr. P. said he had listened with interest to the gentleman on these points.

[Mr. W. COST JOHNSON said he did not speak of the corruptions of the Federal Government. He spoke of the power of the Government, and among other things, illustrated it by the number of persons who looked to the central Government for patronage, but did not reflect upon the motives of the candidates for public favor, or debate their right or their motives. He spoke altogether of the vast power of the Executive head of this nation.]

Yes, sir, it was melancholy to think of these things; and yet the bill on your table is calculated to increase this power and patronage tenfold. When I reflect on the great tide of office seekers, who rushed here on the 4th of March last, like half famished wolves on the great prairies of the West, I confess I tremble for the future, as to the increasing power of this Government. However, this great herd—this mass, hungry and howling as they were, did not effect me as much as other things. When I turned my eyes from them, and saw those who occupied high places, who were considered amongst the distinguished of the land—when I saw them smelling their way into the greasy places of the “Palace,” licking their chops, and, dog-like, wagging their tails for the bones that might be thrown them—I confess I felt every proud emotion and lofty aspiration sink and sicken with disgust. And now make an habitual distribution of money from this Government, and you increase all these disgusting scenes. You create dependants and expectants in every State throughout this Confederacy. The purple of Presidential power would be put up every four years, and bid for by the plunderers of the Republic. All heroism, and patriotism, and valor, would die away, and the lowest vices would reign triumphant. Avarice—keen, hungry, and lean—would be the god before which the nation would bow down and worship in base idolatry. Have we read the lessons of history to no advantage? Look at Republican Rome—once a proud and heroic people. They were powerful and virtuous, until demagogues taught them to look to the public granaries for corn. As soon as they began to divide the spoils, they became a nation of robbers and plunderers, and sunk

into the deepest degeneracy and corruption. And are we now to commence a system which will inevitably lead us through the same career? Call up your hordes from this wide-spread land, who will habitually receive money that you may collect here for distribution, and you create a mighty system, which will finally prove the *euthanasia* of the Republic. If the States should submit to it (which I think probably would not be the case,) we would then sink down quietly into the basest despotism—the pity and contempt of mankind. Where a Government is aristocratic in its form, those who wield its power may become enervated and corrupt for a time, and yet the nation may recover, because the great body of the people may still be virtuous and patriotic. But when a Republic, where the power is in the people, becomes corrupt, then the whole body politic languishes and dies—there is no recuperative energy—the heart of the system is poisoned, and every pulse and muscle becomes feeble and languid.

The gentleman speaks of this system as calculated to advance State Rights. From what analogy does the gentleman draw his reasoning? Sir, I consider the provisions of the Constitution, strictly construed, not at all incompatible with State Rights; and it is a great mistake to suppose that those with whom I act would take one particle from the just power of this Government. Engraft upon this Government this system of distribution, so alien to the Constitution, and you break down all desire to keep up any general system of defences calling for heavy expenditures. You would sacrifice the great objects and ends of this Union. A distinguished Senator, now Secretary of State, has made an argument which indirectly intimates that it is the duty of this Government to assist the States, (if not to pay their debts,) from the fact that the States have surrendered the most important source of their revenue, the customs. He says that on the part of the Atlantic States this is a great sacrifice. Follow this idea out, and apply it to this system of distribution. You propose to collect money from the new States, and divide it annually amongst the old Atlantic States, and the result will be that they will soon begin to turn their eyes towards the customs. They will argue that by consumption they pay as much of the imposts as the Atlantic States do through which the importations are made, and that as you divide the money brought into the revenue from the new and interior States, it is your duty also to divide that coming from the customs. They will say that, as they pay by consumption as much of the taxes from customs as you do, and as they receive but little of it back, and as you take all the land revenue collected from them and divide it, that they must have something to equalize the moneyed action of the Government. They will demand it as right. And, sir, there will be some plausibility in it. And after the next census, they will not stop to ask you if it be a sound argument—but they will have the power to make it law. You tread on dangerous ground when you commence this system—ground at war with the high purposes of this Union. When you ask money to defend your flag upon the ocean—when you ask for money to defend the land at home and your

honor abroad—you will find ten thousand greedy interests springing up throughout the States, demanding the last dollar for division, while you will have to submit to insult and dishonor, and a deluded and betrayed people will sink down into driveling imbecility. Sir, I love the war attributes of this Government. I love its capacity as secured by the Constitution, for a common defence of our common rights and united honor. I love its power in war—and its forbearing principles in peace.

Let it be powerful in war from its commanding the undivided attachment and loyalty of a devoted people in peace. Let all local interests be strictly left to the States—let what is common to all—our independence, liberty, and union—be sacredly guarded and defended by a common Government. Mr. Chairman, I would not, if I could, take a single power from that sacred charter that binds these States together. Sir, I would not, if I could, pluck a single feather from the plumage of the American eagle. No; let him stand forth in all his vigor, and power, and glory, but let him stand upon the scroll of the Constitution, and my heart shall always exult to see the bright constellation of American States forever glitter and glow around his brow.

The Constitution, strictly construed, is as it should be. There is no need of adding by construction. It is a vast mistake to suppose that the strength of the Union or the Government is increased by assuming power: it is the reverse. Formerly, usurpation added strength. But the world is now changed. Intelligence and information are spreading throughout all ranks. There is a keen jealousy towards unnecessary power. An uneducated people may submit to the exercise of strong and useless authority in Government; but exercise doubtful and needless power amongst an intellectual people, who have been educated to freedom under a Government limited by specific grants, and you create murmurs, jealousies, and resistance, which will make its habitual exercise a source of weakness instead of strength. The strength of our Government consists in its justice, and in confining itself within proper limits. By so doing, it will be able always to command the united and devoted support of all sections and all interests. This is its strength.

If you pass such measures as this, and teach the States to look here for distribution, they will make this Government the collector of taxes for their entire support. They will transfer the odious power of taxation from themselves upon this Government, and the people will have little or no control over the matter. The consequence will be, that the large central States of the Union, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, will overshadow the Government, and, by concentration of action, will control it entirely for their benefit, without reference to the small and remote States of the Union. And if war should be forced upon us, these central States will be the only ones capable of defence; whilst the extremities will be sacrificed, they will hold the revenues of the General Government under their control, and use those revenues for themselves. This they will be enabled to do from their location and concentrated action; and this distribution once established, with its

attendant consequences, will always give them the most ample means of control.

But, Mr. Chairman, continued Mr. P. the moneyed operation of this bill, is not as important as its political effects upon the union and harmony of the States. It is from the new States alone that you will collect the money which you propose to divide. This will force them together in feeling and in action, and throw the old States on the antagonist grounds. Do you expect that this will produce the kindest feelings? It will be the reverse. Are we to legislate for the day or the year? No, sir; look to the future. There is now sufficient difference in interest between different States of the Union, and do not increase that difference by creating a system which will make one portion in effect tributaries, and the other portion recipients of bounties. In twenty years from this, our population will be about 32,000,000; in forty years, it will be near 64,000,000; and in eighty years, it will be near 130,000,000. And what are eighty years in national existence? Literally nothing. You will see in that time, star after star rising from your magnificent domain but to add new lustre to your national banner. And are you so vain as to believe that this miserable and temporizing system which you now propose to create, will stand the test of time? Will that spirited and noble population which will roll from the valley of the Mississippi up the sides of the Rocky Mountains, bear a system by which you will collect annually millions upon millions from them, merely to be distributed amongst the fund-holders and stock interests of your Atlantic cities? If you call from them their treasure to defend our rights and honor, they will pour it out without a murmur; but pervert it from these high purposes to mere distribution of money, and it is not nature to bear it. You may call it no tax, but a mere sale of land. This will avail but little. They will call it a collection of funds creating an annual drain. They will look upon you as hard task masters, and their feelings of attachment and sympathy will give place to the worst passions of the human heart. Why, Mr. Chairman, should we look upon that splendid country to be settled with one particle of jealousy? They are "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"—we all have a common feeling and a common destiny. Let them go on and develope the resources of an unknown country. Every settlement, every county, every State, adds to the national wealth and national power. Every man, who spreads his tent upon the praries of the far West, is but preparing to open new fields of enterprise and wealth for our common country. And, sir, if these old Atlantic States should ever be invaded, the great valleys of the West will be nurturing up a daring and heroic race, who will come back to fight the battles of liberty over the graves and the tombs of their fathers. Do nothing, I entreat you, to alienate this great people from the rest of the Confederacy. Let us all sleep in peace forever, under the broad folds of one common banner. Let us rejoice in their growth and their prosperity. Nature has placed their country there. We cannot strike it from the map. It is in vain to attempt to check the swelling tide of emigration. You might as well attempt to chain the wave of the ocean.

Let us not look upon them as rich provinces, from whence we can collect wealth to divide out and distribute amongst an agrarian people. Pass the bill upon your table, and you make them tributary vassals. You lay the foundation for a separate and independent empire in the West.

At one period of the world, the Roman eagles floated in triumph and in power from the Euphrates to Gibraltar. But when her conquering generals habitually brought back spoils and wealth from devastated provinces, to be divided at the centre amongst those who were styled "*Roman citizens*," the Government sunk down in corruption and blood; and now, the scattered fragments of a broken and dismembered empire exist here and there, only to mark where the Republic once was. If the new States were peopled by an ignorant and half barbarian race, you might then calculate on their sinking peaceably into a State of tributary vassalage. But as it is, pass this system—look upon them as future sources of revenue for permanent distribution, not to support the honor of the Union, but to feed drones and speculators, and you will see the beacon fires of an indignant people blaze over a thousand hills from one end of the country to the other.

Mr. Chairman! the management and settlement of our immense public domain, is to a great extent our colonial system. The management and settlement of new States has always been a delicate and important question to every Government that has encountered it.

I am one of those who believe we have made no great improvement over the ancients in their knowledge of human nature, or of those elements calculated to make a State great. When they settled a colony, they nurtured and cherished it with pride. They did not lay their colonies under tribute. They did not look upon them as permanent sources of revenue. No: they looked upon them as friends in peace and allies in war. They acted towards them in the most liberal and enlightened policy. It was left to the commercial avarice of modern times to pursue a different course. England, Portugal, and Spain, had the finest colonies ever known. But they looked upon their growing wealth and enterprise with jealousy; they made them permanent sources of revenue for the mother country; they raised from them annual contribution with which to enrich themselves. The consequence was, that they lost the finest possessions that ever belonged to any people. And it is only by modifying their policy, that they have been enabled to retain any portion. And now with the lights of experience before us, you propose by this bill to adopt a system somewhat similar in its principles to that formerly adopted by Spain and England in relation to their colonies. And the final consequences will be the same. You may find some of the new States acquiescing for a time under their embarrassments and the pressure of commercial derangement, but they will soon recover from that. You cannot keep down the energies of this people. Their embarrassments are but temporary. They will rise above them in a very few years. Are we to legislate for a mere temporary state of things? Is it wise to pass a bill of this kind, which was to operate upon millions of hu-

man beings as enlightened and as free as ourselves, under pressure and embarrassments from which they were sure, in the progress of things, to be relieved in a very short period? and that, too, when the very principles of the bill were so well calculated to produce alienation and unkind feelings? They will soon assert the doctrine that under the Declaration of Independence they came into the Union as equals, and that to own the freehold within their limits, is an essential attribute of sovereignty. You will force upon them this doctrine.

Mr. Chairman, what is the state of the world? In the vast improvements of the age, we find every nation around us increasing their military power. Have we no difficulties? Have we no points of difference with a haughty and powerful nation? True, we were at peace. But we had recently shown, through the accredited agents of our Government, a spirit and tone but ill calculated to sustain the honor and independence of the country. I will forbear to speak my sentiments on that point at present. It is a delicate matter, and I will suppress the feelings of scorn that I entertain for the manner in which our foreign intercourse has recently been conducted. But is this a time to divert an important branch of your revenue from the public defences of the country? Were we prepared to take a course that would dry up our resources at a time when they might be needed for the highest purposes of Government? If there be any surplus, spend it on your navy, to protect your flag from open dishonor—guard your commerce—defend your soil from violation—your citizens from murder—prepare to sustain your rights at home and abroad—spend your money for these purposes. But I entreat you to do nothing that will alienate the affections of any portion of our people from their Government at this juncture of our public affairs. Let not this great Union be perverted from its high national objects into a contemptible machine to collect revenue to be distributed amongst those who will hang around your Treasury as fawning sycophants and profigate bankrupts.

Mr. Chairman, I know that I address a fixed and inexorable majority. But let me appeal to them to consider what they are about to do. Coming as they do fresh from the conflict of bitter party contests, and flushed with the triumph of victory, have they reflected fully on this great subject with a sole view to promote the lasting good of their country? Those only live in the admiration of posterity who can, on great occasions, rise superior to party trammels, and look alone to their country, her honor, her interests, and her true glory. If Napoleon, in his pride of power, had consulted the partner of his early fortunes, and looked with a single devotion to the star of France, he might this day have been wielding in peace the same sword that he flashed in the blaze of victory at Marengo and Austerlitz. There is no policy so fatal as to push power to an extreme. Sir, we are at an important point in legislation. I appeal to gentlemen to survey the ground well. I invoke the spirit of the entombed Constitution to save my country from the ruin that awaits her, if these reckless schemes be adopted.